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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM/ANE, EUR/SE, NEA/NGA AND IO
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EUCOM FOR J3 AND J5
CENTCOM FOR J3, J5 AND POLAD

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TURKISH REFUGEE/IDP CONTINGENCY PLANNING; RESPONSES ON HUMANITARIAN MAPPING STRATEGY

REF: A. 2002 STATE 264634
¶B. 2002 ANKARA 7687

(U) Classified by Charge d'Affaires Robert Deutsch for reasons 1.5 B and D.

¶1. (S) Summary: During the January 3 military-military talks, the Turkish General Staff provided a map identifying planned locations for Turkish-run IDP camps to EUCOM and CENTCOM representatives. MFA Head of Department for International Political Organizations Feza Ozturk largely confirmed previously-disclosed information on GOT contingency planning for a refugee/IDP crisis, including provision for up to 276,000 persons and siting of some camps in northern Iraq. He noted that Turkey was short of tents in relation to its plans. Ozturk and other interlocutors were very cautious about NGO involvement in humanitarian assistance, but the GOT is still considering whether and how to involve them in its planning. Prime Ministry Deputy Undersecretary Mustafa Cetin told DCM that the GOT had done considerable planning, but did not go into detail. He did express willingness to work with foreign humanitarian NGOs, and urged Embassy to discuss this further with MFA. Turkish Red Crescent's Director General told us that the organization did not have sufficient supplies to cover all needs in the contingency plan and said he would provide details later. He also expressed concern about conducting relief operations in an environment in which CBW could be used. Econoff also raised ref A request with Steven Corliss, UNHCR's Deputy Turkey Representative, who said he would pass this on to UNSECOORD. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Emboffs discussed refugee/internally displaced person (IDP) contingency planning connected with possible military operations in Iraq as well as ref A's request for humanitarian mapping information in separate meetings with Feza Ozturk, MFA Department Head for International Political Organizations; Mustafa Cetin, Deputy Undersecretary in the Prime Ministry; Fatih Evren, General Director of the Turkish Red Crescent; and Steven Corliss, Deputy Turkey Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mapping Information Shared at Mil-Mil Talks

¶3. (S) During the January 3 military-military talks in Ankara, the Turkish General Staff provided a map to EUCOM and CENTCOM representatives identifying the locations of planned IDP camps in northern Iraq.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¶4. (S) Contingency Planning: Econoff and Polmilloff met with Feza Ozturk, MFA Department Head for International Political Organizations, on January 7 to discuss Turkey's contingency planning for a refugee/IDP crisis and to relay ref A request on humanitarian mapping. Ozturk largely confirmed and fleshed out details of planning previously given by UNHCR and also leaked to the local press (ref B). The GOT has the capacity to deal with 276,000 refugees/IDPs, but Ozturk stressed that this was not necessarily the number expected at Turkey's frontiers in the event of military operations. He said the number would depend on a number of unknown variables, including whether there would be a northern front. The plan calls for up to 18 camps (12 in northern Iraq and 6 on Turkish territory). The camps and supplies are modular and can be launched and augmented in increments of 3,000 persons. The Turkish military would be responsible only for external camp security, with six Turkish regional governors from southeast Turkey and the Turkish Red Crescent

responsible for internal administration. Turkey would set up camps inside Iraq first and only open the six camps in Turkey if needed. All camps in Iraq would be within an hour's drive of the Turkish border. Ozturk said the facilities could be erected within several days or at most one week. Ozturk said that the Red Crescent had pre-positioned some of its 30,000 to 35,000 stock of tents and other supplies in Silopi, but that these stocks were insufficient relative to the plan. He said that, in the event that the full 276,000 refugees/IDPs required help, Turkey would have to ask for tents to shelter up to 120,000 persons. Crisis centers would be established at the Prime Ministry and MFA. A regional crisis center would be established in Diyarbakir, with several Turkish diplomats posted there. Gaziantep would serve as the logistical hub.

¶ 15. (C) Ozturk stated that Turkey's contingency plans had been shared in part with UNHCR, but not with foreign governments/donors and he requested that we protect this information. He noted that UNHCR had made a quiet appeal to donors for supplemental funding, but that Turkey did not plan to make a similar appeal at this point. Of course, if the Red Crescent exhausted its resources, Turkey would approach donors to replenish its stocks. We asked if the GOT had shared its plans with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which controls the territory in northern Iraq where Turkey intends to set up the camps. Ozturk responded that the GOT had not.

¶ 16. (C) On the Geneva Convention: Ozturk pointed out that although Turkey is a party to the Geneva Convention on Refugees, it has made a geographical reservation accepting the treaty's obligations only with respect to refugees from the European continent and does not accept refugees from its eastern neighbors for resettlement in Turkey. He acknowledged that Turkey would in the future have to amend this policy as a condition of EU membership.

¶ 17. (C) Role of NGOs: Polmiloff noted that NGOs were an integral part of USG humanitarian relief planning, both for Iraq and elsewhere, and asked Ozturk what the GOT's views were on a role for NGOs in this possible crisis. Ozturk said the GOT was very cautious about certain (unspecified) NGOs, contending that some had pursued a political as well as humanitarian agenda following the Gulf War and had supported the PKK. He noted the GOT's standing decision to ban border crossings into northern Iraq of NGO personnel in 1996 (though some exceptions were granted later). Note: During the January 3 military-military talks, TGS said that it was GOT policy not to allow NGOs to enter Iraq via Turkey during the combat phases of an operation. End Note. He cited the absence of an official border authority on the Iraqi side as another reason for the prohibition, saying Turkey would remain responsible for the activities of NGO representatives after they crossed into Iraq. Ozturk said that humanitarian relief was within the mandate of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross in Iraq, and that the GOT wanted to work closely with UN agencies as well. He said the GOT's principal concern was to assure centralized and coordinated humanitarian relief, with the Turkish Red Crescent as the focal point. However, Ozturk said that the GOT was considering whether and how to bring NGOs into its contingency planning and said an interagency meeting on this subject was to be held later on January 7. There was, he said, little prospect for resolving the problem of NGO access to northern Iraq through Turkey even if a decision was made to let NGOs participate in Turkish relief efforts.

¶ 18. (C) Predictions: While acknowledging that there were as yet too many unknowns to predict humanitarian need connected with an operation in Iraq, Ozturk opined that a mass movement towards Turkish borders was not likely unless the threat facing the population were extreme (e.g. chemical/biological warfare, proximate armed conflict). He said that IDPs were likely to move just far enough within Iraq to avoid immediate danger and would probably aim to stay within the country rather than seek shelter in Turkish camps guarded by Turkish soldiers.

Prime Ministry

¶ 19. (S) On January 3, DCM and Econoff met with Mustafa Cetin, the newly-appointed Deputy Undersecretary in the Prime Ministry, to discuss GOT refugee/internally displaced persons contingency planning. Adil Ozdemir, General Directorate of Turkish Emergency Management, and Ilgin Atalay, head of the Prime Ministry's Foreign Relations Department, also attended. DCM emphasized that the USG still hopes that military operations can be avoided through peaceful disarmament of Iraq, but that it is prudent to plan for the possibility of a

refugee/IDP problem on Turkey's frontier. He also suggested that any possible crisis will be much easier to handle to the extent that our two governments can cooperate fully and coordinate activities. DCM asked for the GOT's thinking in handling this problem, particularly with respect to assistance that may become available from private humanitarian organizations. He also noted that the USG had begun to collect mapping information on humanitarian facilities and personnel in Iraq, and asked Cetin if the GOT had any information to share on this.

¶10. (S) Noting the strain on Turkey of the influx of refugees/IDPs in 1988 and 1991, Cetin said that the GOT had done considerable contingency planning and hoped to be better prepared if a similar crisis arose in the near future. However, he suggested that Embassy contact MFA's Multilateral Political Affairs General Directorate and Kizilay for a more detailed information, including on humanitarian mapping. Cetin expressed interest in cooperating with NGOs in providing assistance, and told us he would discuss this further with MFA. He suggested that Kizilay should be the point of contact for those organizations. Cetin thanked DCM for the United States' interest in raising these issues and its willingness to cooperate in this area.

Turkish Red Crescent

¶11. (C) Econoff and Medical Attaché met with Fatih Evren, General Director of the Turkish Red Crescent, on January 6 on these issues. Evren stated that there were gaps in the Red Crescent's supplies relative to expected need in the event of a crisis, and that he would consult with the Red Crescent's President on a list of needed items to be shared with the USG. On the role of NGOs in providing relief, Evren noted negative experiences with certain NGOs after the Gulf War and stated that the Red Crescent preferred to work only with UNHCR and other UN agencies. However, he added that this decision was up to the GOT and suggested that we raise this with MFA. On the humanitarian mapping request, Evren responded that Red Crescent had no presence in northern Iraq and referred us to MFA on this also. Evren expressed concern that the Red Crescent was unprepared to provide assistance or treat refugees/IDPs in the context of use of chemical/biological weapons. Medical Attaché offered to provide medical information on planning and treating patients connected with CBW attacks.

UNHCR

¶12. (S) Econoff met with Steven Corliss, Deputy Turkey Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on December 30 to request that UNHCR provide data on the locations of its operations in Iraq through UNSECOORD (reftel). Corliss noted that, although UNHCR Turkey did not have any personnel or sites in Iraq, this could change if UNHCR staff in Iraq were evacuated in connection with military operations. He told us that he would report the demarche to UNSECOORD and would also relay our request to the Turkish Red Crescent.

¶13. (C) On contingency planning, Corliss told us that UNHCR planned to open a regional center in Diyarbakir in the event of a refugee/internally displaced person crisis, and that it already had staff in Van and Silopi. On the issue of preparedness for providing assistance to refugees/IDPs who may have been exposed to chemical/biological weapons, Corliss confirmed that UN agencies would evacuate if CBW were used. He added that he assumed the Turkish and U.S. militaries had plans for this contingency, but told us that Red Crescent had not.

Comment

¶14. (S) Embassy believes we have reached the stage where it would be useful to begin sharing further information with the Turks on USG contingency planning, particularly the roles we contemplate for NGOs in our response to a crisis and our ability to address any gaps in Turkish relief supplies. IDP/refugee issues are and will continue to be an integral part of the mil-mil talks, but we need soon to begin integrating our proposals and supply chain with the Turkish civilian and UN response plans. That would include beginning to identify for the GOT and establishing a linkage with any USAID/DART or NGO elements that are part of our proposal. Please advise.

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